

## **Residential Checklist: Emergency Escape and Rescue Openings**

### **Egress Windows and Window Wells**

**Permits** - permits are required when installing an egress window or other emergency escape and rescue opening. An egress window with a finished sill height below the adjacent elevation must have a window well that allows the egress window to fully open.

Basements, habitable attics and every sleeping room shall have at least one operable emergency escape and rescue opening. Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, emergency egress and rescue openings shall be required in each sleeping room. Where emergency escape and rescue openings are provided they shall have a sill height of not more than 44 inches above the floor.

It is commonly found, when remodeling or finishing a basement, that the existing window openings typically do not meet the egress requirements. Additions, alterations, or repairs shall not cause an existing structure to become unsafe or adversely affect the performance of the building. Therefore,

### **TO MEET THE EGRESS REQUIREMENTS, THE WINDOW(S) MUST BE BROUGHT UP TO CURRENT CODE REQUIREMENTS**

#### **GENERAL CODE REQUIREMENTS:**

- The removal of one or both sashes from the frame, with or without tools, is NOT an acceptable means of meeting the egress requirement, and will NOT be approved. The minimum opening size must be achieved through the normal operation of the window (without removing the sash). Emergency escape and rescue openings shall be operational from the inside of the room without the use of keys, tools, or special knowledge.
- Casement window openings shall be measured when opened a minimum of 90 degrees.
- The 2012 International Energy Conservation Code requires ALL replacement windows to have a U-factor of 0.35, SHGC factor of 0.40 or better AND the openings between the window assemblies and their respective jambs and framing shall be caulked, gasketed, weather-stripped, or otherwise sealed with an air barrier material (spray foams are acceptable).
- If the egress window is installed under a deck or porch, the window must be allowed to open fully and a path at least 36 inches in high is provided to a yard or open area.

#### **EMERGENCY EGRESS WINDOW REQUIREMENTS (all four must be achieved)**

1. 20" Minimum clear opening width (when open).
2. 24" Minimum clear opening height (when open).
3. 5.7 sq. ft. (821 sq. in.) minimum net clear opening (see exception below).  
**Note:** using both the minimum width and height will not obtain the required 5.7 sq. ft.
4. The finished sill height shall not be more than 44 inches above the finished floor.

**Exception:** Grade floor emergency escape and rescue openings, defined as a window or other opening located such that the sill height of the opening is not more than 44 inches above or below the finished ground level adjacent to the opening, shall be permitted to have a minimum net clear opening of 5.0 sq. ft. (720 sq. in.).

## Common windows used for egress

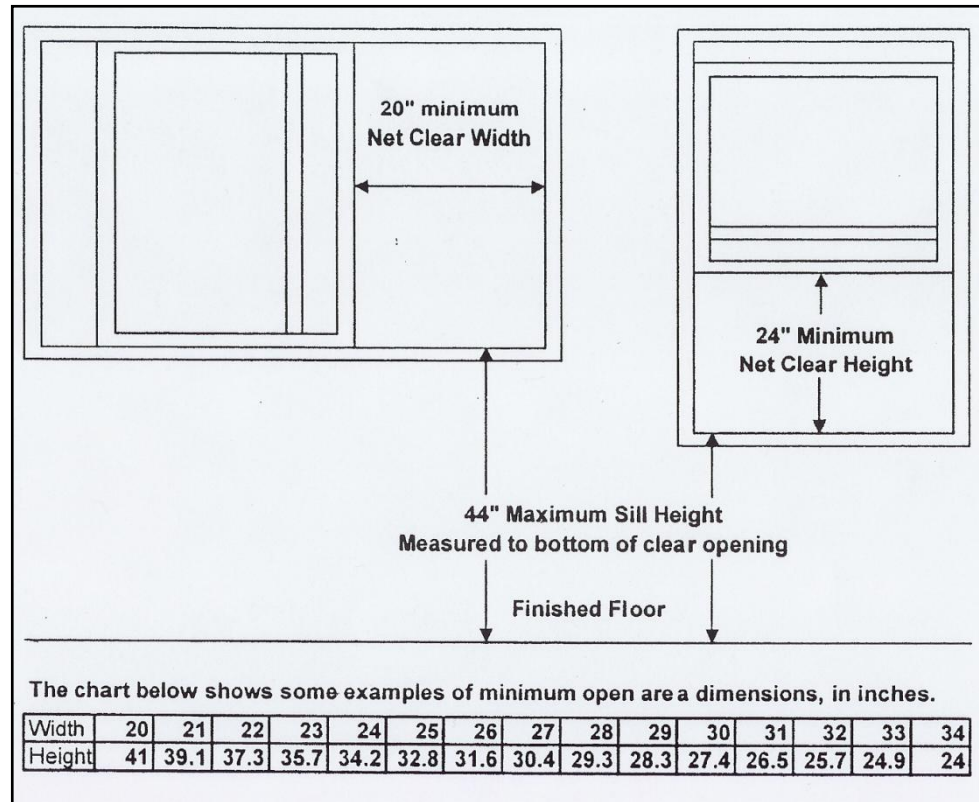
Sliding:

5'-0" wide x 3'-0" high

4'-0" wide x 4'-0" high

Single hung:

3'-0" wide x 5'-0" high



## EGRESS WINDOW WELL REQUIREMENTS

- ☐ The minimum horizontal area of the window well shall be 9 square feet, with a minimum horizontal projection and width of 36 inches x 36 inches.
- ☐ The area of the window well shall allow the emergency escape and rescue opening to be fully opened.
- ☐ Window wells with a vertical depth greater than 44 inches shall be equipped with a permanently affixed ladder or steps usable with the window in the fully open position. The ladder or steps shall be permitted to encroach a maximum of 6 inches into the required dimensions of the window well.
- ☐ Ladders or rungs shall have an inside width of at least 12 inches, shall project at least 3 inches from the wall, and shall be spaced not more than 18 inches on center vertically for the full height of the window well.
- ☐ Bars, grills, covers, screens, or similar devices are permitted to be placed over emergency escape and rescue openings, bulkhead enclosures, or window wells that serve such openings, provided the minimum net clear opening size complies and such devices shall be releasable or removable from the inside without the use of a key, tool, special knowledge, or force greater than that which is required for the normal operation of the escape and rescue opening.

## SMOKE ALARMS

When alterations, repairs or additions requiring a permit occur, or when one or more sleeping rooms are added or created in existing dwellings, the individual dwelling unit shall be equipped with smoke alarms located as required for new dwellings; the smoke alarms shall be interconnected and hard wired.

**Exception:** Inter connection and hard-wiring of smoke alarms in existing areas shall not be required where the alterations or repairs do not result in the removal of interior wall or ceiling

finishes exposing the structure, unless there is an attic, crawl space or basement available which could provide access for hard wiring and interconnection without the removal of interior finishes.